

To Whom It May Concern,

I am unable to attend the forum this coming Tues as I work and then have the responsibility of caring for my child during this time. However it does not mean I am not passionate about my son's school, The CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering.

Let me tell you why this school is so important to me, to my son and to the many families who have chosen to send our children to this magnet. This school provided both a middle school and high school experience that I could not get in my district. The class sizes are smaller, the grade sizes are smaller, in fact the whole student population is a fraction of what they are in Southington. The middle school he would have attended had over 600 kids compared to the 300 at AA&E. The only high school in our town has over 2200 students as compared to the 400-500 students at AA&E. This smaller environment provides a better learning experience. My son does not have to compete for teacher time, he is less likely to be bullied, and he doesn't get lost in the crowd. The teaching staff is completely dedicated to the students and their unique curriculum. Many of the teachers are former professionals in the subjects they now teach, such as engineering or science. This brings real world experience into the classroom. The students are at these schools because they are seeking a better education experience, are hard working and invested in their education. AA&E has partnerships with companies in aerospace, engineering and science which allows the kids to have mentorship opportunities with managers at these companies. It gives them a look at what it's like to do a particular job in the real world. There are less disciplinary issues in these magnet schools. The kids have been taught manners and the uniforms provide an environment where everyone is perceived as being equal (no one family is any richer or poorer than the other because all the kids dress the same). Finally these schools offer a different method of teaching-project based or theme based which creates a more unified academic environment.

Now let me tell you why this was the ONLY choice for my son. My son is Autistic. I was not going to have him in schools where the population is so large he can't be protected. I was not going to have him subjected to the type of bullying his older sister endured while at JFK in Southington. Mr. Moore as vice principal has made it his mission to instill in these kids a sense of right and wrong and expects them to behave in a respectful manner to the teachers and each other. I have witnessed students walking down the halls and greeting the teachers with a "yes mamam" or "yes sir". You don't get that in public schools. The staff know the kid's names and engage with them outside the classroom which helps create stronger ties to the school. My son also excels in technical subjects such as math, science and computer technology. The curriculum at AA&E is perfect for him. While they focus on technical subjects they manage to present the traditional subjects in a manner which works for kids who aren't necessarily fond of English or History classes. In our public schools the emphasis on creative writing neglects to take into account that MOST students are not going to be writers, or editors or in fields where that skill is required. At AA&E the focus is on writing from a technical perspective which again is much more real world oriented. Every one of my son's teachers has been completely dedicated to his success. They have worked with me, with his special education teacher and his behaviorist to ensure the best academic experience. My son is thriving at AA&E even though the day is longer and their curriculum is much more challenging than what he would have been exposed to in his home district schools. A magnet school was the ONLY way I could get my son an academic experience similar to that of a private school while still being able to receive his special education supports that are only available in the public school setting.

For many of us, for many different reasons, private schools are not an option. Please leave our magnet schools alone, please provide them the support then need. I'm a firm believer in Open Choice schooling. As a parent I have to do what is right for my child. Educators should know by now that one size does not fit all. Magnet schools provide us with educational options.

Batiste G. Zgombick  
Proud AA&E parent.